

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 18007

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN WAKE OF GENERAL ELECTION

REF: TOKYO 17935

SUMMARY. IN WAKE OF DECEMBER 5 GENERAL ELECTION, SEVERAL
NOTEWORTHY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE OCCURRED. AMONG
MOST SIGNIFICANT WERE JOINING OF LDP BY EIGHT CONSERVA-
TIVE INDEPENDENTS GIVING PARTY BARE MAJORITY OF LOWER
HOUSE SEATS. YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC) HAS
ASSUMED SPECIAL IMPORTANCE AS LOGICAL COLLABORATOR WITH
LDP IF LATTER IS TO RETAIN ABILITY TO MANAGE LOWER HOUSE
SMOOTHLY. AND GRADUALLY, EXPECTATIONS OF MIKE RESIGNATION
HAVE INCREASED. FOR THEIR PART, OPPOSITION PARTIES AND
LABOR ANNOUNCED DIFFERING AND CONTRADICTIONARY IDEAS ABOUT
APPROACH TO OPPOSITION UNITY. END SUMMARY.

1. AS ANTICIPATED, NEWLY ELECTED EIGHT CONSERVATIVE
INDEPENDENTS (ALL BUT ONE OF WHOM DISPLACED LDP INCUM-
BENTS) AFFILIATED WITH LDP IMMEDIATELY AFTER ELECTION GIVING
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LDP SCANT MAJORITY OF 257. LOCKHEED INDICTEES TANAKA

AND HASHIMOTO, ALONG WITH FORMER LDP DIETMEMBER TOKUMA UTSUNOMIYA, CAN BE EXPECTED TO VOTE WITH LDP ON MOST ISSUES; FOUR OTHER UNCOMMITTED INDEPENDENTS ARE ALREADY AFFILIATED WITH LDP FACTIONS AND WILL PROBABLY JOIN PARTY BEFORE LONG, BRINGING LDP/CONSERVATIVE STRENGTH IN LOWER HOUSE TO 261, PLUS THREE UNAFFILIATED SYMPATHIZERS. (TWO REMAINING INDEPENDENTS ARE LEANING TOWARD NLC AND FOUR TOWARD OPPOSITION PARTIES.)

2. DIET MANAGEMENT. EVEN 264, HOWEVER, WILL BE SHORT OF NUMBER NEEDED TO ASSURE LDP CHAIRMANSHIP AND MAJORITIES IN ALL SIXTEEN LOWER HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEES (SEATS ARE ALLOCATED ON PROPORTIONAL BASIS) AND SOME KIND OF COOPERATION WITH OTHERS WILL BE NEEDED. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSERVATIVE-LEANING NLC HOLDS "CASTING VOTE," AND LDP LEADERSHIP HAS ALREADY MADE OVERTURES.

3. MIKI'S INDIRECT APPROACH TO NLC AT HIS DECEMBER 6 NEWS CONFERENCE WAS LIGHTLY REBUFFED BY NLC LEADER YOHEI KONO, WHO INSISTED THAT LDP MUST FIRST "SELF-REFLECT" ON ELECTION DEFEAT. LDP POLICY AFFAIRS COUNCIL CHAIRMAN RAIZO MATSUNO MADE MORE SUBTLE PITCH LATER TO ALL MODERATE OPPOSITION PARTIES, NOTING THAT NLC COULD NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED AS MERE "EXTENSION" OF LDP. HE SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF CONCLUDING POLICY AGREEMENTS FOR COOPERATION, BUT NOTED THAT THESE MUST INCLUDE FUNDAMENTAL AGREEMENT ON US-JAPAN MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY, DEFENSE POLICY AND MAINTENANCE OF FREE ECONOMY -- ALL PRINCIPLES THAT NLC SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH. NLC LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS HAVE NOT RULED OUT COOPERATION WITH LDP, BUT OPPOSITION HAS BEEN COURTING GROUP AS WELL, AND IT WOULD NOT BE INCONCEIVABLE FOR IT TO JOIN MODERATE OPPOSITION, DSP FOR EXAMPLE, IN FIRST ROUND OF BARGAINING WITH LDP. IN BROADEST TERMS, HOWEVER, NLC IS FUNDAMENTALLY COMMITTED TO MODERATE CONSERVATISM, JAPANESE-STYLE, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF JAPANESE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY.

4. ELECTION RESULTED IN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN LDP FACTIONAL ALIGNMENT. ACCORDING TO ASAHI (ACCOUNTS VARY SLIGHTLY) CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH EXCEPTION OF NAKASONE FACTION (UP FOUR FROM PRE-ELECTION COUNT), AND MIZUTA FACTION (UP TWO), ALL FACTIONS SUFFERED SLIGHT (2-3) LOSSES. MOST HEAVILY HIT WERE OHIRA AND CHINNA (DOWN FIVE). IN TERMS OF SUPPORT FOR MIKI, ASAHI CALCULATES LITTLE CHANGE, WITH 52 LDP DIET MEMBERS SUPPORTING MIKI (VS. 51 BEFORE ELECTION), 146 ANTI-MIKI (157) AND 59 (57) UNDECIDED OR NEUTRAL.

5. DESPITE INSIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN FACTIONAL STRENGTH, LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE REIGNITED DAY AFTER ELECTION WHEN AT POST ELECTION PRESS CONFERENCE, MIKI CHALLENGER FUKUDA WASTED NO TIME IN CALLING FOR MIKI RESIGNATION BY STATING THAT LEADERSHIP PROBLEM COULD BE EASILY SETTLED BY "RESPECTING MAJORITY WILL OF PARTY." IN LATER INTERVIEW FINMIN OHIRA WAS MORE GUARDED, REFUSING TO CRITICIZE MIKI, BUT NOTING THAT FUKUDA WAS STILL LEADER OF ANTI-MIKI GROUP AND PARTY SHOULD DECIDE QUESTION ON "BASIS OF PARTY RULES." PRESSURE IS BUILDING ON MIKI FROM RANK AND FILE AS WELL, BUT MIKI CONTINUES TO HOLD HIS GROUND, INSISTING HE HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFORM AND REBIRTH OF LDP.

6. LDP POLICY BOARD CHAIRMAN MATSUMO, IN SEPARATE INTERVIEW, STRESSED NECESSITY OF PREVENTING OPEN BATTLE BETWEEN MIKI AND FUKUDA AND SETTling PARTY LEADERSHIP QUESTION QUIETLY AND SMOOTHLY. THERE IS ALREADY SOME MEDIA SPECULATION, WHICH WE EXPECT TO INCREASE, THAT MIKI HAS ALREADY MADE UP HIS MIND TO STEP DOWN AND HAND OVER PARTY PRESIDENCY AND PRIME MINISTERSHIP TO FUKUDA, POSSIBLY AT PARTY CONVENTION AFTER DECEMBER 20. IF TRUE, HE WOULD DO SO IN MANNER CALCULATED TO RESERVE MAXIMUM INFLUENCE IN POST-MIKI GOVERNMENT.

7. OPPOSITION PARTY UNITY CRUMBLES. AFTER MAKING OBLIGATORY BOW TO VOTER WISDOM, OPPOSITION PARTIES REACTED DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING ON THEIR ELECTION SUCCESS -- OR FAILURE. JSP STRESSED OPENING OF ERE OF REFORMIST COALITION, THOUGHT SHARED BY NEWLY AUGMENTED CGP AND DSP. JSP AS USUAL, HOWEVER, INSISTED ON INCLUSION OF JCP "BECAUSE THEIR NUMBERS ARE ESSENTIAL" (JSP SEC GEN ISHIBASHI), WHILE CGP AND DSP ADAMANTLY REFUSE TO ACCEPT JCP. (FEARING ISOLATION, JCP IS FIGHTING FOR INCLUSION.) THUS, ONLY FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AFTER ELECTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE BACK TO SQUABBLING AMONG THEMSELVES.

8. FOCUSING ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTION RESULTS FOR OPPOSITION, LABOR LEADERS UNANIMOUSLY AGREE JSP WAS UNABLE TO TURN VOTER DISSATISFACTION WITH LDP TO ITS OWN BENEFIT AND THAT REAL WINNERS OF ELECTION WERE CGP AND NLC. SOHYO HEADQUARTERS STAFF MEMBER TOLD US THAT MODERATES IN SOHYO PARTICULARLY DISCOURAGED BY DEFEAT OF JSP VICE CHAIRMAN EDA AND HIS KEY LIEUTENANT KOICHI YAMAMOTO, PRINCIPAL FORMULATORS OF STRATEGY TO LINKS JSP, DSP AND CGP INTO NEW ANTI-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION GROUPING VIA SOCIETY TO THINK ABOUT A NEW JAPAN. ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, JSP MAY WELL ABANDON ITS RECENT MODERATE STANCE AND ADOPT MORE RADICAL COURSE AT COMING CONVENTION. DOMEI CHAIRMAN AMAIKE, CLAIMING

GREAT DSP VICTORY, HAS ONCE AGAIN URGED JSP TO JOIN DSP AND CGP IN ANTI-COMMUNIST ALLIANCE IN DIET. IN RESPONSE, SOHYO SEC GEN TOMIZUKA YESTERDAY PUBLICLY URGED FOR FIRST TIME THAT JSP ABANDON EFFORTS TO FORM UNITED OPPOSITION COALITION AND INSTEAD SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON ALLIANCE WITH CGP ALONE IN FORTHCOMING DIET. LABOR COMMENTATORS EXPECT ELECTION RESULTS WILL GIVE EVEN FURTHER IMPETUS TO EFFORTS BEGUN EARLIER THIS FALL TO REVIVE LONG DORMANT PLANS FOR NEW NON-COMMUNIST NATIONAL LABOR CENTER.

9. MORE TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF ELECTION STATISTICS AND OTHER FACTORS WILL BE CABLED SOON.
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